2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1937 F317 Ngonde F317 Nyakyusa

Besides fighting, the dancers indulge in an orgy of destruction, slashing at the banana and *fava* saplings (which surround the *ewanje* courtyard) with their spears.

The dance was thus, traditionally, a common form for the expression by the dancers of a considerable range of emotions, varying from an intolerable burden of grief and fear to a recognition of and salute to the warlike quality of the dead man and a vivid consciousness of their own. And this last feeling passed easily into actual fighting.

To-day it is not so much into the excitements of warfare that the feelings turn, but rather into those of love. Burial dances are the occasions of much sexual display, of the beginning of some love affairs and the consummation of others, and this is nothing new. 'At a death people did not want war (though it came sometimes), they wanted love-making: they displayed the pride of their strength!' 'We speared our mother . . . our wives called the warcry when they saw the strength of their husbands.'

Dances of sexual display, on occasions other than burials, are traditional among the Nyakyusa; but all our informants are unanimous in declaring that both these other dances and the dances of burial are far more frequently followed by lovers' meetings than they used to be. For the enforcement of peace among the Nyakyusa has been accompanied by the prohibition of violence of any kind; and this has freed sexual passion from its rigid traditional bonds. Girls are married young and engaged younger; and while formerly any man who seduced or even lived with another man's betrothed or wife was speared or tortured by the husband and his friends if they caught him, such punishments are now illegal and the present fine of cattle is a far less effective deterrent. 'In the old days love-making only went on in secret; if a man stood and talked to a woman he expected to be speared. But now the Europeans have introduced the custom of making love openly!' (i.e. by forbidding the previous penalties.)

For all the younger men and women, save the chief mourners and close friends, the quality of the burial dance is now predominantly and openly sexual. But the older people are, on the one hand, more conscious of its warlike associations and, on the other hand, inclined to regard the whole occasion more soberly than their juniors. 'There are two reasons for coming to a burial: the old men come to mourn their friend, they say: "Let us go and mourn him"; but the young men say: "Let us follow the

2: Wilson E-S (1934-1938;1957 FN17 Ngumbo FN17
Nyakyusa

tradition of the leaping dance and show ourselves to the girls!" And so it is with the women, some of the young women do not come to mourn but to call the war-cry to the boys! Those who come to mourn go into the hut and weep and weep. The young men say that they dance by reason of the women. The old men say that in the past it was different, it was war; the women ran behind the fighters watching the battle and calling the war-cry. And we all say that the present custom of dancing is the softer custom of a peaceful land.'

As the old significance of the dance to the majority of the participants was a lively salute to the dead man's fighting quality and a heightened sense of their own, so now it is his sexual quality which they honour and their own which they enjoy. 'Why', we asked a young man, 'do you dance nowadays at burials? There is little or no warfare and the dead man was never a fighter!' His answer came almost in the traditional form of words: 'We think that he too danced before the women, he was a brave dancer (*mgi*), and so we too dance (*shalima*) at his death.'

'He too was a brave dancer (*mgi*).' The word *mgi* is from the verb *shamga* which refers to the ordinary dances of sexual display in contrast to the war-dance (*shalima*). It is the war-dance which is still normally danced at death. Not only, however, is its significance being assimilated to that of the ordinary dances of courtesion, as this quotation clearly shows, but these other dances are now often performed at burials. Near Rungwe Mission the pagan dance the war-dance on the first day of a burial and sometimes on the second day as well, but always on the third day the dance is changed. The men abandon cloth shirts, spears, and ankle-bells and put on their best clothes, an ample white toga being particularly fashionable; the women adorn themselves with great care and some put roses in their hair. The dance is no longer a wild melée, but is slow and graceful, and its sexual significance is now apparent, not only in the faces of the dancers and the comments of the bystanders, but also in the forms of movement.

This custom is new. None of the chief mourners takes part in the dance, though they watch it. In the war-dance, however, the chief mourners among the men are expected to participate, and some of them always do so. 'The (men) relatives dance if they have strength, they sway hip and then dance. For if they all sit still and no one of them dances we others say that they have not mourned him properly.' But they do not all dance. One old man whose

2: Wilson E-9 (1934-1938)1937 F917 Ngunde F917
Nyakyusa

brother had just been buried said: 'Those who are really sad sit quite still and silent.' But he was an old man with little strength for dancing; on the first day of his brother's burial he sat still, but on the second day he danced a little.

As for the women who participate in the war-dance, running about among the men and calling the war-cry, their behaviour is clearly distinguished in accordance with their relationship to the dead man. The distant (women) relatives dance in their dirt, they cannot adorn themselves much, but non-relatives adorn themselves. The wives and sisters of a dead man and the nearer women relatives are the chief mourners and they cannot dance at the burial. They are truly grieved. If a wife danced we'd say she did not love her husband—well, perhaps she might wander round distraught to the sound of the drums, but with grief on her face and without looking at the young men! If she looked at the young men we'd say she did not love her husband. If a brother's wife danced we should laugh at her and say she was no kinswoman of the dead man! But for a man it is different, he dances with his grief to ease his heart to bear it. In the old days, if there was a fight, the chief women mourners did not follow and call the war-cry, but the others; all the men went to fight but not all the women to watch.'

Our observation shows that there is just as much dancing at the burials of women as at those of men. Here too the dance, as now performed, combines the two functions: assuaging the fearful grief of some people and providing a sexual display in honour of the dead: 'We dance at her burial, for she too was a brave dancer (*mapi*).' But in the old days also there was dancing at women's burials: 'For a woman', one old man explained, 'bears a man, so that she too is a warrior.' 'In the past,' said another old man, 'we did dance at women's burials, only a little, not so much as at men's; we said that she was only a woman, but that now the less she also was concerned in war.'

The change in the quality of the burial dance is one of emphasis only; in the past also the sexual element was present: 'We danced so that the women should see our strength'—but it was not dominant. And the warlike quality which was then dominant has by no means disappeared; we heard of many spear-fights at burial dances. At one of them the chief, in order to prevent its continuance, made the dancers abandon the war-dance and finish the funeral with the ordinary dances of sexual display.

The emotional quality of mourning (*ubuhite*) is different in

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
FN17 Ngonde FN17

the fang will drop out, and the man will be saved! There are men living near me who claim to have seen this being done.

The birth of children is accompanied by loving care, gross superstition, and much medical treatment, useful or otherwise. All women at that time are given a drink of *indolo* leaves, pounded and mixed with water. If the placenta has not come away satisfactorily, castor oil is given. And if pain supervenes, the bark of *indolo* is again given, pounded and mixed with water. For a child weak at birth, roots of *usudu* and *mangwina* are taken, pounded, mixed with water, and the child is washed in the mixture. Sterility in man or woman can be removed by the right drugs; and when a woman is getting on in years and wishes no more children, a mixture is in use which will have the desired effect. Medicines for producing abortion are widely known, and frequently used, as also are love potions.

Steaming is resorted to in cases of great pain or weakness. Water is cooked in a large pot, with the bark of *mparampara* added. When the pot has boiled, it is taken off the fire, and the patient, covered with a mat, kneels over it, supported if very weak, for about ten minutes. Massaging also is employed when one is very tired, the leaves of *mayoka* being pounded to give a juice for lubrication, or, as the people themselves say, to get into the body through the pores. Cupping is employed for headache and rheumatic pains. Eight cuts are made in two lines, on each side of the head; a small horn is put over the cuts; a

13:Lehmann E-5 (1939)1951 F367 Ngonde F367
Nyakyusa

535 [832] These dances seemed to be a representation of "sex appeal" or courting. Each new phase of the dance was introduced by the advancing of one or two young women fairly near to the side of the men, then each retreated followed by the whole lines of both the sexes. If the youngest girls present who stood mostly behind the "dancing" line (i. e. the group of the advancing women and older girls) were to come too near the proper dancing place, they were driven back. The older people and the *amafumu* were only spectators.

535 292 The women had no special dancing dress, but the men did. They now were mostly a sort of tight jackets or sweaters and wide robes, coloured or with patterns.

References

113 *Fülleborn, Friedrich:* Das deutsche Njassa- und Rovuma-Gebiet, Land und Leute, nebst Bemerkungen über die Sabire-Länder. Berlin 1906.
Johnston, H. H.: British Central Africa. Third Ed. London 1906.
Dr. Klepert: Karte (Mitteilungen aus den deutschen Schutzgebieten, 6. Bd. Berlin 1893).
Merensky, A.: Deutsche Arbeit am Njassa. Berlin 1894.
Mackenzie, D. R.: The Spirit Ridden Konde. London 1925.
Thorswald, R.: Black and White in East Africa. London 1935.
Wilson, G.: An Introduction to Nyakyusa Society. Bantu Studies, Vol. X. 1936, pp. 253—291.
Wilson, G.: The Land Rights of Individuals among the Nyakyusa. The Rhodes-Livingstone Papers, No. 1. Livingstone, Northern Rhodesia, 1936.
Wilson, G.: Nyakyusa Conventions of Burial. The Rhodes-Livingstone Papers, No. 2. Livingstone, Northern Rhodesia, 1938.

Synopsis

060 Verfasser legt seine Ermittlungen vor, die er während seines dreimonatigen Aufenthalts im Dorfe der Manoko (die zu den Nyakyusa gehören) sammelte. Sie geben einen Einblick in die damals, 1938, überwiegend traditionsgebundene Lebensweise dieses Stammes, namentlich bezüglich der Medizinmänner und der Behandlung der Kranken. Um im Falle der Schwester des Häuptlings die Ursache der Erkrankung zu ermitteln, wurde ein Wahrsager gerufen, der bei einer Sitzung den Ehemann als Urheber feststellte. Zur Heilung wurden vom Häuptling Zeremonien am Grabe von dessen Vater angeordnet. Außerdem beschreibt Verfasser aus eigener Erfahrung die Trauerzeremonie nach dem Tode eines Kindes, die Initiation eines verlobten Mädchens u. a.